(b) whether Air Force accepted the equipment inspite of several shortcomings detected during the course of evaluation trial and if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether this equipment had to be returned in February, 2001 on account of failure to meet the operational requirement; and

(d) if so, the logic behind procurement of defective equipment and responsibility fixed for this misadventure?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES)r(a) Bharat Electronics Ltd. supplied "Analogue Code Message Encryption Multi-Dimensional Communication Secrecy Device" costing Rs.4.47 crore, during December 1996—January 1997, to Indian Air Force.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. The pre-production trials were successful but the actual supplies were found unsatisfactory even after modifications carried out by Bharat Electronics Ltd. Hence, they were returned.

(d) Does not arise in view of reply to (b) and (c).

Purchasing of secondhand MIG trainers

1579. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had recently purchased 27 secondhand MIG trainers to meet the urgent training requirement of Indian Air Force;

(b)ifso, the details thereof including the total expenditure incurred thereon and the age of each aircraft;

(c) whether it is a fact that some of the East European Countries like Romania and Bulgaria have grounded or withdrawn some of the MIG variants; and

(d) if so, the reasons for purchasing such aircraft?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The Government nave not purchased 27 secondhand MIG trainers recently.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Information with regard to grounding or withdrawal of MIG variants by the East European Countries is not available.

(d) As new MIG-21 trainers aircraft are not available in the global market, being out of production, secondhand MIG-21 trainer aircraft were purchased in the past to meet the training requirements of the Indian Air Force.

Proposal to increase the strength of flighter squadrons

1580. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any proposal from the IAF about the necessity to increase the current strength of Flighter Squadrons;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken or proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) The Indian Air Force has formulated a modernization plan to enhance its combat aircraft strength in terms of quality as well as quantity.

(b) and (c) All necessary steps are being taken to increase the combat ability of IAF.

Procurement of NBC protective gear

1581. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has signed an agreement to procure protective gear for nuclear, biological and chemical warfare from the Czech Republic;

(b) if so, what are the other items that are proposed to be procured from the Czech Republic; and

(c) by when the products would arrive and be used?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) As on now, no agreement has been signed with the Czech Republic for